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Alaska National Guard

State finalizes purchase of land for veterans cemetery

Interior cemetery will complete regional resting place for veterans

FAIRBANKS, Alaska – A five-year process is finished, as the State of Alaska has closed on land near Fairbanks suitable to build a veterans cemetery. The property, located on a Fox hilltop with great southern exposure, is 320 acres and will provide a spiritual experience for all families whose veterans find their final resting place in this area.

The federal U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs no longer builds National Cemeteries and instead builds state cemeteries, where veterans can receive their full burial benefits. The land must be owned and operated by the state, and the federal VA will provide the funds to construct a veterans cemetery with the same look and feel of the Arlington National Cemetery.

"Veterans, and their families, who live in the Interior deserve this hallowed ground to remember the service and sacrifice of these great Alaskans," said Gov. Sean Parnell. "I am proud to see this project begin the design phase and I look forward to seeing construction start next summer."

When this project was proposed in 2009, the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs began to diligently search for property already owned by the state that could meet the unique requirements of a veterans cemetery. Because of complications with permafrost and zoning, there was no state land available within a 15-mile radius of downtown Fairbanks. So the DMVA went to the public to seek a minimum of 100 acres for sale from a private entity. Local entrepreneurs John and Ramona Reeves came forward with a valid option.

"We are very pleased that this beautiful property will be used to honor the men and women of our armed forces," said John and Ramona Reeves. "Both of our dads were, and always will be, Marines who served in World War II. It is an honor to help bring this vision to reality."

National Cemeteries already exist in Sitka and outside of Anchorage on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson. Building a veteran cemetery in the Interior will complete the burial options for veterans to receive their full benefits in all major population areas of the state.

The land in Fox is also the ending point of the famous Davidson Ditch. An interpretive display will be built into the final construction of this project to reflect the importance of the historic landmark.

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